

CLAIMS:

1. A hub apparatus to which one or more storage devices and a contents reproducing apparatus can be electrically connected, said hub apparatus comprising:

a CPU; and

a key storing apparatus for storing therein keys each of which is used to decode encrypted contents data,

wherein said key storing apparatus has:

authentication means for authenticating said contents reproducing apparatus and said storage device which are electrically connected to said hub apparatus;

means for when said contents reproducing apparatus is authenticated as the other party of the communication by said authentication means, transmitting the key corresponding to the encrypted contents data as an object of the playback to said contents reproducing apparatus by utilizing the cipher communication; and

means for when said storage device is authenticated as the other party of the communication by said authentication means, reading out the key to be transmitted to said storage device to transmit the key thus read out to said storage device by utilizing the cipher communication and for deleting the key thus transmitted thereto from the storage contents.

2. A hub apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said key storing apparatus is removably attached to said

hub apparatus.

3. A controller which is electrically connected to a hub apparatus, comprising:

acquisition means for acquiring the apparatus and device information of various kinds of apparatuses and devices which are electrically connected to said hub apparatus;

means for by utilizing said apparatus and device information, selecting a contents reproducing apparatus, which is used to reproduce the contents, among said various kinds of apparatuses and devices which are electrically connected to said hub apparatus;

means for retrieving a contents storing device in which the encrypted contents data of said contents is stored;

means for retrieving a key storing apparatus in which a key which is used to decode said contents data is stored; and

means for transmitting an instruction to reproduce said contents to said contents reproducing apparatus which is selected by said selection means.

4. A controller according to claim 3, further comprising:

means for by utilizing said apparatus and device information, retrieving a key storing apparatus in which a key which is used to decode said contents data is stored among said various kinds of apparatuses and devices which are electrically connected to said

hub apparatus; and

means for transmitting an instruction to move the key to said key storing apparatus.

5. A hub apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising:

acquisition means for acquiring the apparatus and device information of various kinds of apparatuses and devices which are electrically connected to said hub apparatus;

means for by utilizing said apparatus and device information, selecting a contents reproducing apparatus, which is used to reproduce said contents, among said various kinds of apparatuses and devices which are electrically connected to said hub apparatus;

means for retrieving said storage device in which the encrypted contents data of said contents is stored;

means for retrieving a key storing apparatus in which a key which is used to decode said contents data is stored; and

means for transmitting an instruction to reproduce said contents to said contents reproducing apparatus which is selected by said selection means.

6. A contents reproducing system which manages the encrypted contents data and a key used to decode said encrypted contents data, said system comprising:

a hub apparatus;

a controller;

a key storing apparatus which is electrically connected to said hub apparatus;

a contents storing device which is electrically connected to said hub apparatus;

a contents reproducing apparatus which is electrically connected to said hub apparatus,

wherein said hub apparatus includes:

a CPU; and

a key storing apparatus for storing therein keys each of which is used to decode encrypted contents data,

wherein said key storing apparatus has:

authentication means for authenticating said contents reproducing apparatus and said contents storing device which are electrically connected to said hub apparatus;

means for when said contents reproducing apparatus is authenticated as the other party of the communication by said authentication means, transmitting the key corresponding to the encrypted contents data as an object of the playback to said contents reproducing apparatus by utilizing the cipher communication; and

means for when said storage device is authenticated as the other party of the communication by said authentication means, reading out the key to be transmitted to said contents storing device to transmit the key thus read out to said contents storing device

by utilizing the cipher communication and for deleting the key thus transmitted thereto from the storage contents, and

wherein said controller includes:

acquisition means for acquiring the apparatus and device information of various kinds of apparatuses and devices which are electrically connected to said hub apparatus;

means for by utilizing said apparatus and device information, selecting said contents reproducing apparatus, which is used to reproduce the contents, among said various kinds of apparatuses and devices which are electrically connected to said hub apparatus;

means for retrieving said contents storing device in which the encrypted contents data of said contents is stored;

means for retrieving a key storing apparatus in which a key which is used to decode said contents data is stored; and

means for transmitting an instruction to reproduce said contents to said contents reproducing apparatus which is selected by said selection means.

7. A contents reproducing system according to claim 6, further comprising means for when specifying the contents becoming an object of the movement, retrieving, from said system, the contents data which is encrypted and which is stored separately in said contents storing devices, and a key which is used to

decode said contents data, respectively, to reproduce
or move the encrypted contents data and said key.